

N. E. Rice (*Amer. Midland Nat.*, 59, 1958: 525) in reviewing the question, mentions theories that the hydroid stage might be introduced into new areas along with water plants, fishes, or mussels to which it might be attached. He comments: "Some of the situations, however, in which medusae have been found, such as borrow pits and wells, would appear to preclude any of these means of dispersal. Conceivably water birds might carry the hydroids in mud on their feet. The hydroid is extremely resistant to adverse conditions and possesses remarkable powers of regeneration. The medusa, on the other hand, is somewhat delicate, and although downstream distribution in flowing water is easy to understand it is difficult to see how the medusa might be introduced into another drainage system on the other side of a divide." So far the hydroid stage has not been reported in Australia.

—BRUCE SHIPWAY, South Perth

**The Preparation of Spinifex Gum by Australian Aborigines.**—It is well known that the Australian Aborigines in the arid areas use in their artifacts a gum made from the highly resinous leaves of "Spinifex" (*Triodia* spp.) but the method of preparation of this material seems to have been rarely described.

In the early part of 1937 I was stationed as a missionary at the Warburton Range Mission, soon after its establishment, when the Aboriginal population was still completely tribalised. I had many opportunities of observing the process of spinifex gum manufacture.

The men burn the *Triodia* clumps with fire sticks. Fire will not normally spread from one clump to the other and each has to be set alight separately. The next stages are wholly in the hands of the women. They come with their wooden bowls or yandies (or *Wira* among the Bidjandjara-speaking people) and winnow out the particles of gum from the ashes.

The original globules of gum, following the burning of the clump, are of quite minute size and may not exceed that of a pin's head. However, many hours of meticulous work will winnow out an accumulation of gum particles from the foreign matter and these are fused into solid lumps, about the size of a man's fist. This is done by the application of "top heat" from fire-sticks that do not actually touch the gum. "Top heat" must be used as the natives have no fire-resistant vessel in which the material can be melted. Like the winnowing, this is all done in the *wira*.

Before use the lump is softened by heat, and the material used in the hot state, after which it sets hard, like sealing wax, when allowed to go cold.

—A. G. MATHEWS, South Perth

[Commenting on the above note Sir John Cleland, Adelaide, states: "I have not heard of this way of obtaining 'Spinifex' gum before. The way I have seen is beating the *Triodia* basal stems on a rock surface and so dislodging the 'gum.' The native women could easily separate the 'gum' particles by yandying in a pitchi."—Ed.]